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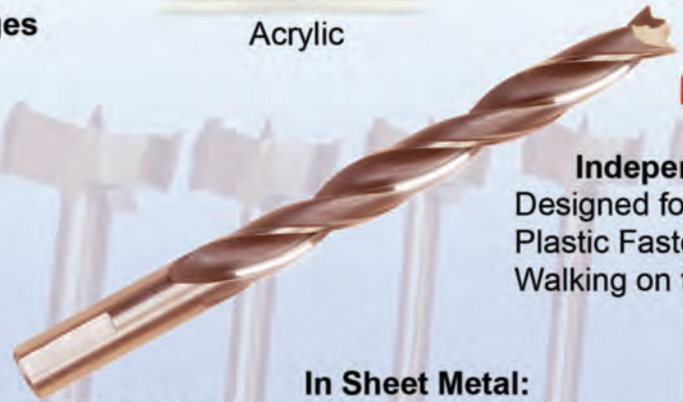

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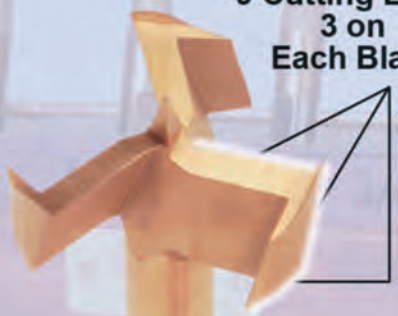

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LETTER *From The Editor-In-Chief*

For many reading this, this will be your first exposure to *Extreme How-To's* new digital magazine. Since 2003, *EHT* has printed 9 issues a year, and now we're branching out with some cool new technology. Over the past several months, we have been providing our print subscribers with a link to a supplemental digital version of the magazine hosted online. This gives our subscribers easy access to the latest issue any time they have internet access, and the response has been tremendous.

We've seen such success with the digital issues that we're now expanding our 9-issue routine with three extra digital issues throughout the year. You're looking at our inaugural Summer Digital Issue, where we provide additional how-to content for your reading enjoyment. What's more, the digital issues are interactive. Experiment with the controls at the top of the page, and learn how to zoom in or out for your preferred page views. Search for your favorite topics, and share stories with your friends via email. You'll find lots of hyperlinks where you can learn more about interesting products. Plus, check out the numerous pop-up videos that demonstrate the latest tools and materials featured.

So, browse the site, click the links and enjoy the issue. If you have any suggestions regarding home-improvement topics that you'd like to see covered in the future, then drop us a line and we'll try to add them to the roster. And in the meantime, be safe and enjoy your summer.

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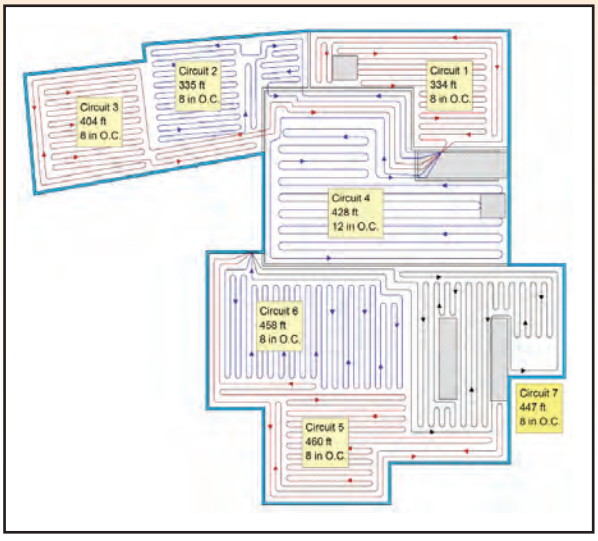

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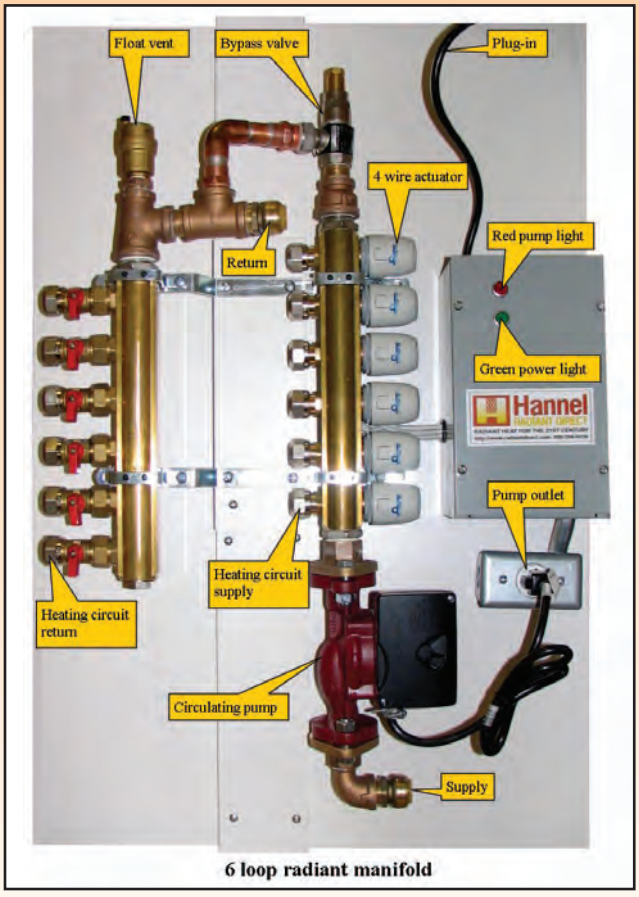

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Q&A Got a ?

Questions About Home Building, Remodeling? Have Your Own How-To Tip? Visit our website at ***www.extremehowto.com*** *and click on Home Repair Forum.*

Q *Can I paint a laminate kitchen countertop?*

A It's generally not a good idea to paint a countertop, because eventually standing water, hot pans, spills, scrubbing, and general wear and tear can lead to the paint losing its adhesion and lifting off the countertop. Worn paint makes for an ugly surface. This rule goes for countertops in bathrooms, too.

Q *Is cement board impervious to water?*

A No. Water can penetrate cement board. However, according to U.S. Gypsum Corporation, the widely used Durock brand cement board, when used in a finished application, can store the small amount of water that gets past the tile, grout and the setting bed. In applications where the cement board may be exposed to large amounts of water like on exteriors or in gang showers, USG recommends using a water barrier behind the board and flashing at the bottom of the wall to allow any intruding moisture a place to escape. It should be noted that while water can penetrate cement board, it does not harm it.

Q *Can metal roofing be installed over my old roof?*

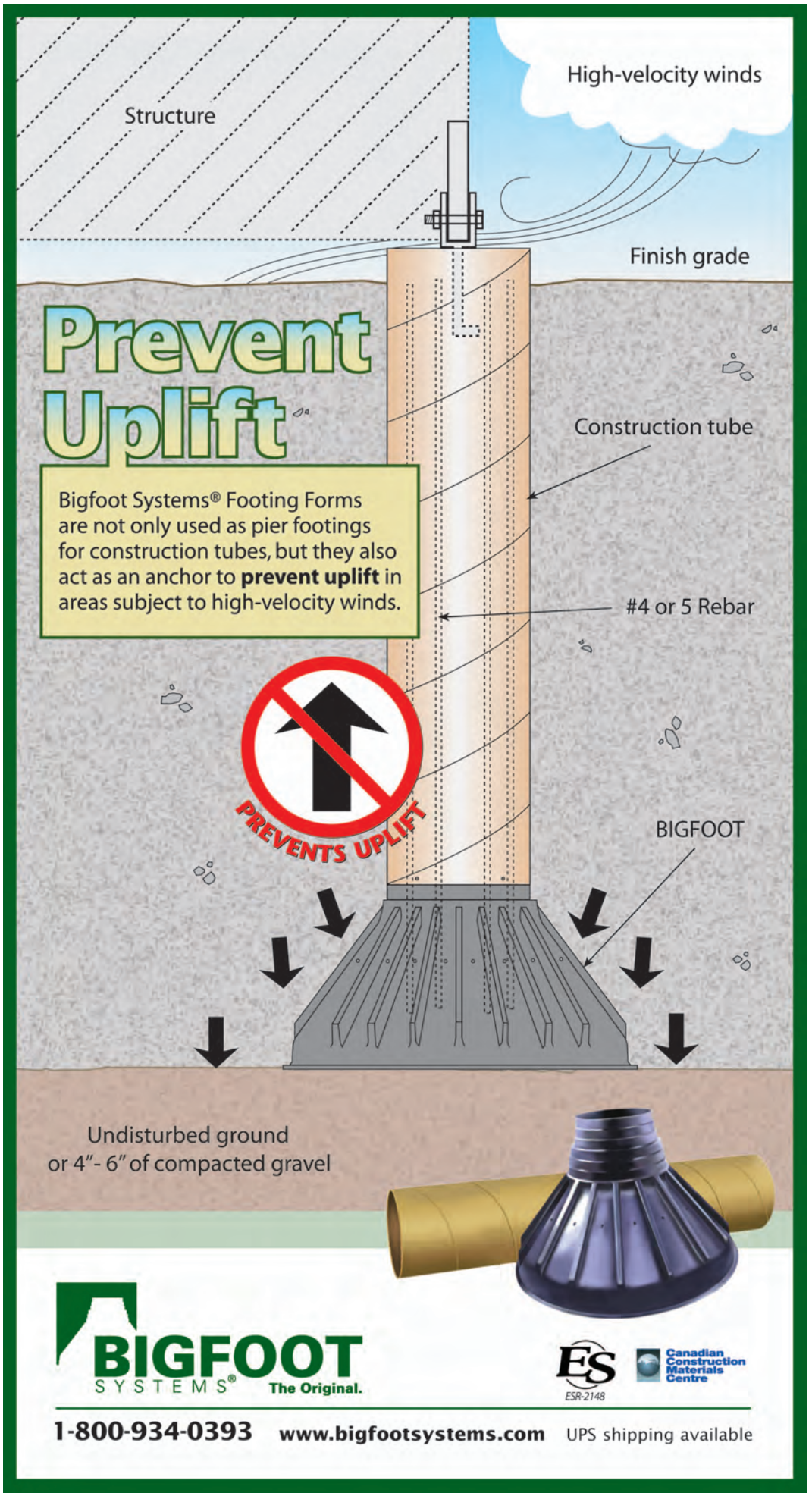
A In most cases, the answer is yes. Metal roofing weighs less than 1.6 pounds per square foot, depending on the gauge. Normally, it will not overload existing roofs. Metal roofing can usually be installed right over asphalt or fiberglass roofing.

Q *How do I re-light the pilot light on my furnace?*

A The first step is to always read the instructions that came with the appliance. With that being said, here are some general guidelines: Turn off the appliance at the thermostat or power switch. Turn the knob on the gas valve to the "pilot" position. Hold down the gas button that sends gas to the pilot burner while simultaneously holding a match to the burner, which is at the end of the small pilot tubing. In some cases you'll need a long match or a little help from some needle-nose pliers. Light the pilot but keep holding down the button for about 60 seconds. Then let go, and the pilot light should stay lit. Turn the gas valve back to the "on" position.

Q *When should I water my lawn after applying fertilizer?*

A The lawn will not reap the nutritional benefits from dry fertilizer until the product is watered in, but you can usually wait a few days for rain without worry. However, there are exceptions. The experts at Scotts Miracle-Gro Company recommend that if you have children or pets who want to play on the lawn, or if the temperatures are expected to exceed 85° F, then you should water the lawn right after a fertilizer application. EHT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Tips for Installing Footings

Here are some useful tips to ensure your footings are installed properly and the integrity of your project is maintained:

- You should always make sure that a qualified engineer has designed the footing you are using and that it has been tested by an accredited evaluation firm.
- Select a footing that can carry the weight of your new construction and has met all the proper building codes.
- Ensure you are placing the footing form on solid ground. The more solid the ground the less likely movement will occur.
- Install your footings 4-6 inches below the frost line to avoid potential movement. If you are in an area without frost, the footing form should be placed two feet in the ground and then backfilled to hold it in place when it is being filled with concrete.
- Rebar is an important part of installation. Pour concrete into the footing system first, insert three or four number 4 or 5 rebar rods into the tube. To determine the length of rebar, measure the distance from the top of the tube to the air holes located on the Bigfoot Systems® Footing Form before you place the system in the excavation and backfill.
- Don't risk having to redo the job, do it right the first time!

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Demolition Devices

New Tools for the Tear-Down

From ripping bars to powered hammers, EHT reviews some breakthrough breakers.

By Matt Weber and Hal Jones

It's generally easier and more exhilarating to tear something apart than to build it up. Demolition is often the first step of a remodeling project, the phase when you're bringing the worksite back to a blank canvas. With a little elbow grease, a big sledge hammer and a crow bar, you can really do some damage. Of course, there are some power tools and purpose-built implements that help bridge the gap between hard work and smart work. Here's a look at some new demo tools for your next foray into destruction.

RIPPING WITH MANPOWER

For a demolition job, the first category to consider is manual hand tools. Although a sledge hammer can dismantle a brick wall, even a heavy framing hammer can make some serious holes in masonry or wood, and do so with a more measured and targeted strike. Both heavy sledges and large framers can be used as basic demolition tools, as well as to drive ripping bars.

Pry bars, crow bars, rippers, etc. provide the necessary leverage to pull nails and rip up siding, decking, flooring or virtually any other material you need to pry away from a structure. When selecting a demo bar, pay attention to the bar's length (thus leverage), weight and quality of construction. The bigger the bar, the more destructive power it will brandish, but the big ones are usually heavier and can fatigue the user more quickly.

For example, we recently put to use a 5-foot breaker bar to demolish the rock bed beneath the topsoil in a co-worker's yard. We were building a fence, and the rock was so solid that it stalled the rented gas-powered auger we were using to dig the post holes. The large, pointed

bar worked well at splitting the rock, but pistoning the heavy iron rod up and down tired us quickly. If you've got lot rock-crushing in your future, then consider forgoing the bar for a powered breaker hammer that you can find at most rental yards. (More on that later).

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The Gutster Demo Bar is Ideal for ripping up deck boards.

As far as recommended demolition bars, the *EHT* staff recently used the Gutster demolition bar on a deck-board replacement job and loved it. The hollow handle cuts down on the weight of the 48-inch bar while retaining excellent balance and lifting power. The angled head with chiseled points can get into small crevices, and the head features prongs spaced to straddle 2-by beams and joists. We used the Gutster Series 2 but recently discovered the manufacturer offers a newly upgraded model, available in two different lengths and with an even slimmer handle.

Another keeper comes from Mayhew Tools. The heavy-duty Dominator Ripping Chisel is constructed of heavy-duty 3/4-inch steel. Great for removing floor tile, wall paneling or plywood, or for use on any overhead demolition where you need a medium-sized wrecker for easy maneuverability, but one that can really handle tough ripping action. The business end features a two-prong chisel with a couple of nail pullers, and the shaft goes all the way through the handle to the end cap. The patented two-composite handle really shines on this tool, because demo bars aren't usually this comfortable to hold. I also like that the end of the handle is capped, which let's you strike the bar with a hammer without damaging the handle.

The Dominator Ripping Chisel from Mayhew Tools features a capped handle to avoid damage when striking the bar.

ELECTRICAL BREAKTHROUGH

For a powered approach to demolition, we'll make our entry point with electric rotary hammers. These tools have an electro-hammer system with a free-floating percussion piston. The impact force of the tool is much greater than that of a standard hammer drill. With rotary hammers, the tool supplies all the impact without any additional pressure from the operator. The impaction ramps up the breaking power while cutting down on user fatigue. In

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Some rotary hammers, such as Hitachi's DH45MR, feature dual operating modes for "hammer drilling" or "hammer only" for chiseling.

Bosch, which developed the SDS tool system for hammer drills, features a full line of carbide bits, carbide cores, steel points and chisels.

fact, applying pressure can reduce the impact of the breaker. These tools are an excellent choice for boring strategic holes in concrete or masonry to weaken the structure. Rotary hammers are sold as dedicated units, but also as combination tools that offer "rotary hammer" plus "hammer only" action—an excellent feature for chiseling away tile and mortar. Rotary hammers provide lots of breaking power in a portable package that can be used horizontally or vertically. Most models are corded, but some are available as cordless units with 36-volt lithium-ion batteries. They also vary greatly in size and weight.

The chucks in modern rotary hammers are designed to accept special bits for additional strength. The most common chuck systems were actually designed by Bosch, dubbed the SDS-Plus and SDX-Max Systems. The breaker points, commonly referred to as "tools" or "steel," usually range in size from 5/8 to 1-3/4 inch.

The next step up in the size of destruction tools are dedicated portable demolition hammers. Although rotary hammers provide drilling action, demolition hammers provide only hammering action, designed specifically for breaking up concrete, masonry and stone. Although not as versatile as rotary hammers, the dedicated demolishers are better engineered to withstand the heat and wear of breaking rock, day in and day out. Like rotary hammers, portable demo hammers

Hilti offers a "self-sharpening" line of chisels and bits.

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The Bosch Brute is one of the most rented power tools in history.

can be used for vertical or horizontal work. However, these tools can cost more than $500, so if you only need it once, then it would be wisest to rent. The same goes for any larger pieces of demolition equipment you might need.

NEW DESTROYERS

Over the past two months the *EHT* staff tested a few new electric hammers on a couple of different projects. These included the Hitachi DH45MR, Bosch 11316EVS, Hilti TE 905 AVR, Metabo's Porsche P9711, as well as rental yard favorite, the Bosch Brute. Here's what we thought:

Hitachi DH45MR

In the realm of rotary hammers, we tested Hitachi's new DH45MR. According to Hitachi, the DH45MR offers the fastest drilling and chiseling speeds on the market. Although our staff isn't privy to all the tool specs on the market, we can say with confidence that it's a real beast of a rotary hammer. It boasts a 1-3/4-inch SDS Max breaker capacity and a "best-in-class" impact energy of 11.4 foot-pounds. The control dial offers two modes of operation: hammer-drilling and hammer only. A 12-Position lock mechanism lets the user select chisel position. Constant speed control delivers efficient performance even under stressful loads. And, variable speed control gives the DH45MR a full-load RPM from 120-240 and an impact rate of 1,200-2,500 BPM.

The DH45MR also comes with Hitachi's patented IDI technology that enables the aluminum housing to be integrated with an injection molded inner nylon core. This technology combines the durability of a metal bodied tool

with the double insulation advantages of today's plastic housings. This allows the tool bearing to sit in die-cast aluminum instead of plastic to extend the life of the tool. A quick online check found a new DH45MR selling for $568. —MW

Hilti TE 905 AVR

Hilti's 905 breaker provided the serious performance we have come to expect from Hilti's line of tools. The tool's design lends itself to vertical applications where it excelled at chipping and breaking apart concrete footings. Lighter than the larger Bosch Brute, the 905 sprinted through 4 inches of concrete so effectively that it became the tool of choice when we needed more power than the lighter units, but did not need the largest tool in our test group.

The 905 uses 1,600 watts of power, so don't skimp on the extension cord or you will end up with a 75-foot light bulb filament. Hilti's 905 uses AVR technology to reduce vibration and also incorporates a soft-start feature that we found very helpful when driving Oz-Post pilings and needed to cease pounding while we checked levels. The feature allowed us not only to check levels without turning the switch off, but allowed us to also drive in the posts at a very controllable speed.

For concrete demolition to remove decking support posts, we used Hilti's self-sharpening line of chisels and bits. We will be using the Hilti bits in upcoming projects to get a better understanding of the self-sharpening feature's effectiveness. With limited use the bits have performed well.

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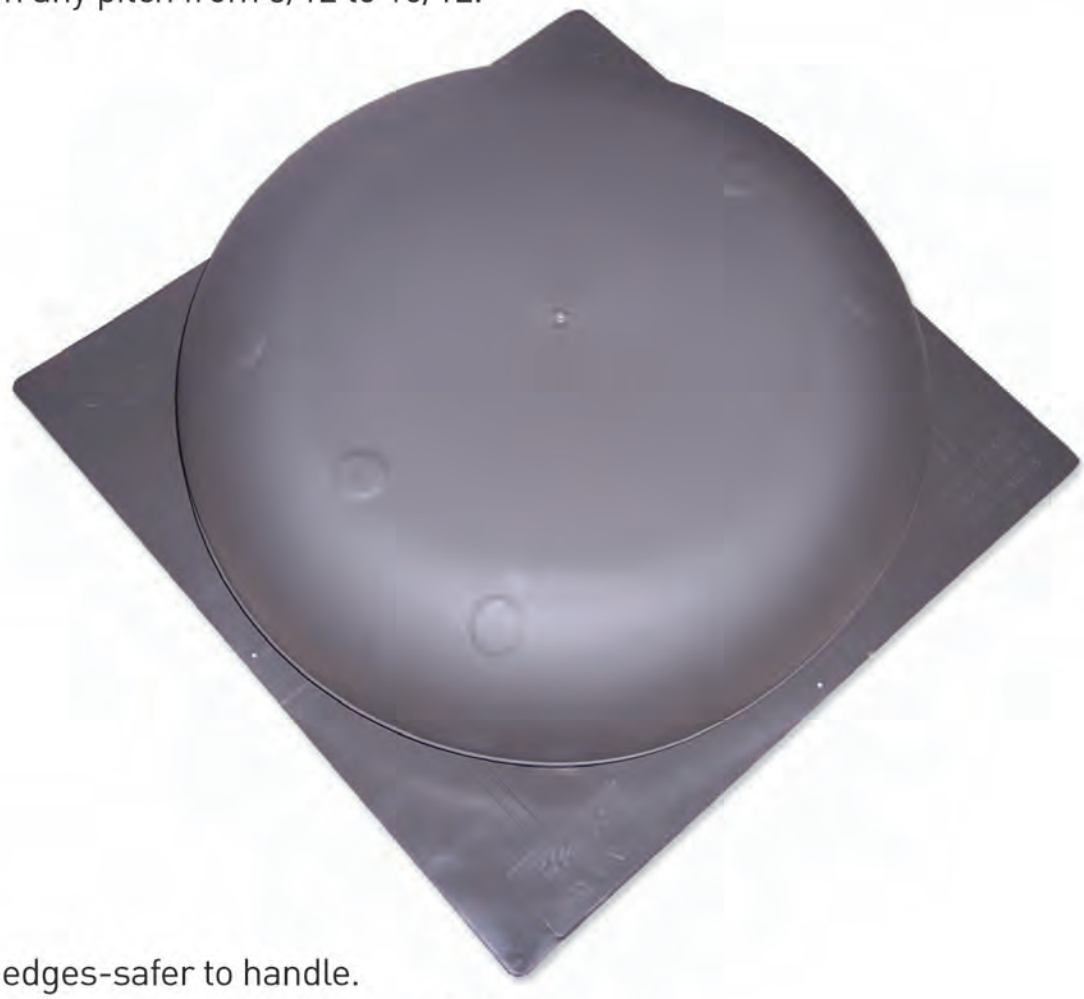

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Carpenter and inventor, James Jensen, has created a plastic crown molding system that offers budget conscious consumers an affordable, easy-to-install solution to wood crown molding.

Crown molding lends beauty and value to a home, but expensive and complicated installation keeps it out of reach for many homeowners. For those who cannot afford to hire a professional, the best solution would be to do it yourself. However, putting up crown molding is not a job for the occasional do-it-yourselfer. Installation requires considerable skill with complex angles, making it nearly impossible for the inexperienced installer to achieve perfect-fitting miter joints.

Born out of the realization that do-it-yourselfers needed a better option, James Jensen devised an easier way. Years of woodworking experience helped him create a system that eliminates the guess-work and technical know-how required to install standard crown molding. After six years of development and two patents, Jim launched Easy Crown Molding, a "do-it-yourself" crown molding system.

Easy Crown Molding is a lightweight, high-impact plastic molding system that offers a simple, peel-and-stick application. No special tools or skills are required, and measuring is unnecessary. A 17-by-17-foot room can be decorated with Easy Crown Molding in approximately one hour. Once installed, Easy Crown Molding gives the appearance of freshly painted, gloss-white, wood molding. Like conventional molding, Easy Crown Molding can be painted to match any décor.

"People can change the look and feel of their homes and add value to their property with crown molding," says Jensen. "It adds a fine finished look to rooms, and can complement any style, from casual to formal. With Easy Crown Molding, now anyone can install crown molding with perfect results, without spending a lot of time or money."

Easy Crown Molding kits are available in 2-1/2-, 4- or 4-1/2-inch molding widths. Each kit contains 16 pre-mitered, 53-inch long, lightweight plastic molding pieces with 3M™ self-adhesive backs, plus four outside corners. Sections simply overlap or can be trimmed to size with scissors. Prices to cover a 17-by-17-foot room range between $49.95 for 2-1/2-inch molding to $89.95 for 4-1/2-inch molding.

Easy Door Crown also is available. This over-the-door molding decorates interior and exterior doors and windows with a peel-and-stick application. Easy Door Crown simply gets added to the top of existing trims and adjusts to fit doors and windows from 25- to 46-inch wide. Easy Door Crown is priced at $19.95. Customers can order Easy Crown Molding or Easy Door Crown at www.ezapeel.com. To view the product installation video, select "Click Here to Play Video Clip" at www.ezapeel.com.

For a free sample, please contact:
James Jensen at 1-888-392-7335

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▲ **Easy Door Crown**
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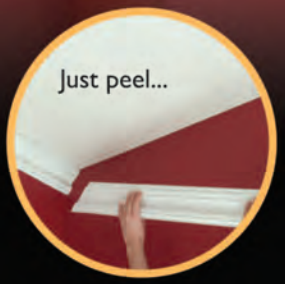

▲ One **Easy Crown** molding kit will decorate a room up to 17' x 17'.

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Hilti offers a full line of bits for the 905 Series, ranging from roughing bits, chisels and ground-rod installers, Hilti has the bits to meet the demands of its professional customers. The DIY crowd will like the 905 if they can rent it instead of the larger jackhammers, as its lighter weight is much easier to work with. For simple demolition the 905 would be an excellent choice. The Hilti sells for less than $1,500 online. —HJ

Bosch 11316 EVS & the Brute

In terms of power-to-weight ratio, the Bosch 11316 demolition hammer outclassed the other units. While it may have lacked the power of the Hilti 905 or the behemoth Brute jackhammer, for all-around demolition the 11316 is hard to beat. On horizontal applications the Bosch broke through brick and concrete block walls with ease, whereas the two larger

units, the Brute and the Hilti 905 were too heavy for any extended horizontal use.

Bosch offers a complete line of bits and chisels for the 11316, and the unit will accept SDS-Max bits of any make. The variable speed allows the user to control the speed of the tool, allowing slower speed for tile-removal work and other light demolition and higher speeds for tackling tough concrete removal projects.

Another use for the 11316 was the spade bit that made digging footings in heavy clay soil a quick task. Usually this chore is back-breaking and time-consuming, but both the Bosch and the Hilti spades saw a lot of use during several deck-building projects. The biggest obstacle was keeping the spade from burying itself too deep, too fast. The Bosch 11316 also has a multitude of tasks it can perform not associated with demolition, such as ground rod driving, (or rebar driving for landscape lumber), core drilling and it was even used to drive galvanized posts into the ground.

For the professional, this tool is a winner for its flexibility. With a weight of approximately 23 pounds, it is no lightweight, but compared to comparable units this is a good choice if you expect to be using the drill in horizontal fashion. A range of 4.4 to 18.4 foot-pounds per blow and a BPM of up to 1,890 ensure versatility for a multitude of tasks. The online price of the unit is a bargain at less than $800. For the advanced do-it-yourself person, this tool's

METABO PORSCHE P7911

In my younger days I dreamed of owning a Porsche 911. Well, finally I got my hands on one. No, not the rear-wheel drive sports car that dominated auto racing like no other make has. Instead, this is the Porche P7911 Multihammer, a joint project of Metabo Tools and Porsche Design. The outside of the drill says Porsche Design, the inside says Metabo quality.

The design of this drill is what sets it apart. The traditional pistol grip and D Handle are replaced by what appears to be an upside-down configuration with the handle mounted to the top. This feature is actually an asset when drilling in close quarters, keeping your hands away from the dirt when drilling near the ground, but it's also cumbersome in overhead use. The weight hanging underneath the handle takes getting used to, and it will take more time to determine whether this is a better way of gripping a drill.

The sleek outward appearance of the Metabo P7911 belies Porsche Design's influence; carbon fibers and aluminum give the 7911 an air of a tool designed for use on the International Space Station. If a drill could be considered sexy, then the Metabo-Porsche design 7911 is Marilyn Monroe.

Power and size, the 7911 is the smallest of the hammers tested. The P7911 is equipped with a two-speed 6.5 amp motor that can deliver up to 2,800 RPM and 4,600 hammer blows per minute. If you just go by the numbers, it's a little better than the popular DeWalt D25203K, whose single-speed 7.5-amp motor delivers a maximum 1,100 RPM and 4,100 BPM. But it also costs three times as much and isn't (yet) available in the USA. The P7911 is compatible with a wide variety of existing SDS Plus bits. —HJ

flexibility and lower costs make it a reasonable choice if you have lots of demolition work ahead and want to work at your own pace without regard to rental fees. —HJ

The **Bosch Brute** is a huge commercial-grade jackhammer we borrowed from a local rental yard. It's very heavy and very expensive and only makes sense to own if demolition (or renting equipment) is your stock and trade. However, if you've got an immovable object, the Brute will probably move it. It's a cannon. **EHT**

For the biggest DIY demolition jobs, the Bosch Brute breaker hammer is a standard in the rental business. Requiring no compressor, the Brute plugs into any 115/120V outlet.

TOOL SOURCES

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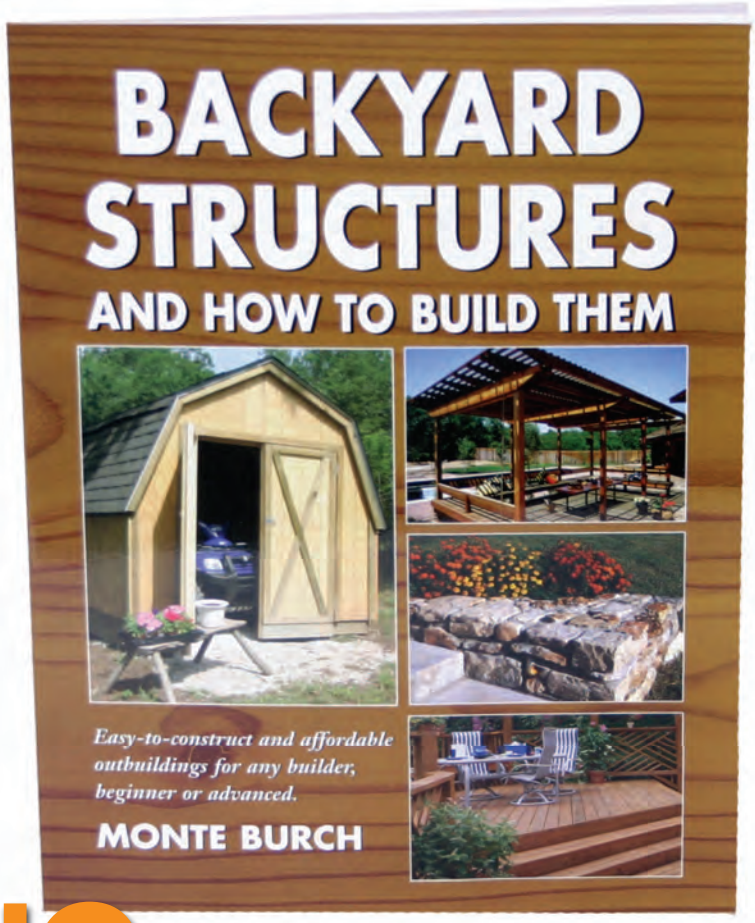
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MONTE BURCH

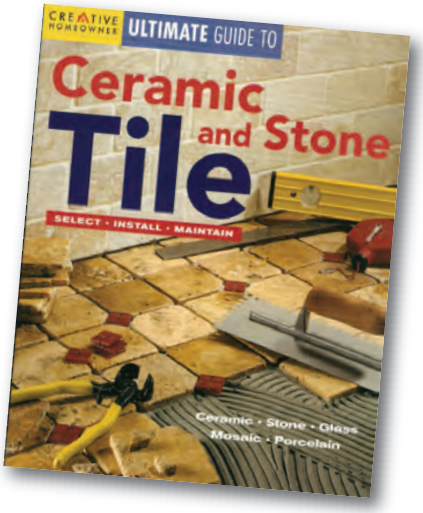
SUMMER READING FOR THE DIY'ER

By Matt Weber

Home improvement is a vast field of study. From electrical work to plumbing, from structural engineering to HVAC systems, each discipline is its own science. The body of knowledge accumulated over the history of homebuilding could fill not just books, but libraries. The *EHT* staff has been building our own library over the years with the many advance copies of how-to manuscripts that are routinely sent to our office for review. These books become crucial desk references for our staff, which we use for all sorts of projects. Here's a look at a few recent selections that we've found helpful, and hopefully you will too.

It's only fitting to kick off our book review with the latest home-improvement title from *Extreme How-To's* long-time contributing writer, Monte Burch. In ***Backyard Structures and How to Build Them***, from The Lyons Press, Burch provides insightful step-by-step instructions on erecting easy-to-construct outbuildings for any builder, beginner or advanced. Included are plenty of schematic plans and in-progress photography that walk the reader through projects such as building a picnic shelter, an attached carport, a walk-through trellis, a child's playhouse and much, much more. The book begins with a basic overview of tools and materials, then provides detailed plans on more than two dozen practical building plans, complete with materials lists. **www.monteburch.com**

For the budding DIY mason to the seasoned pro, ***The Ultimate Guide to Ceramic & Stone Tile***, from Creative Homeowner Press, makes a great go-to guide for selecting, installing and maintaining these materials using professional-grade techniques. You can expect publications from Creative Homeowner



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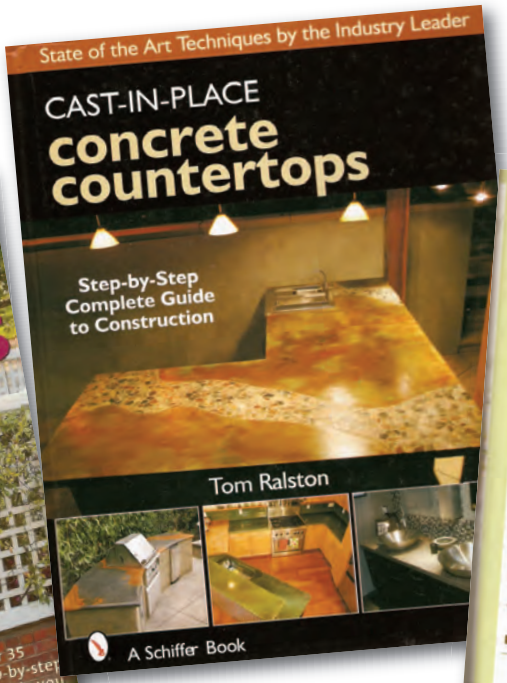
SUMMER READING FOR THE DIY'ER

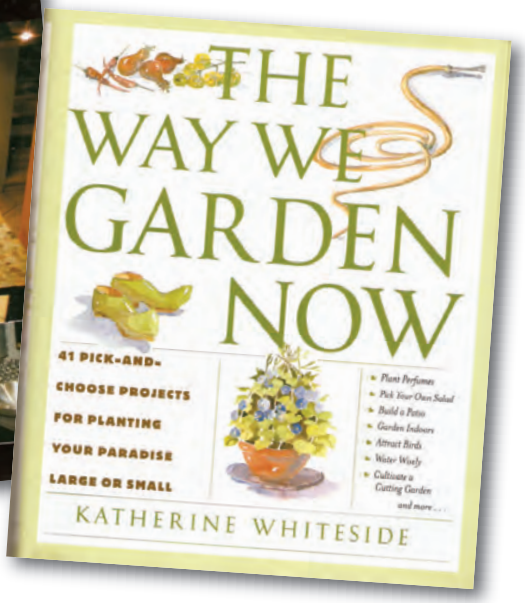
Press to offer top-notch, full-color photography and illustrations, and this handy reference book is no exception. Offering the latest information on products and techniques, The Ultimate Guide to Ceramic & Stone Tile provides more than 60 step-by-step projects to help you install ceramic, stone, porcelain, glass, mosaic, terra-cotta tiles, and a whole lot more. The book includes over 550 photographs and illustrations.
www.creativehomeowner.com

Trellises & Arbors from Sunset Books offers 35 step-by-step projects to enhance your outdoor living area. Choose from a simple wall trellis, built from 2-by-2's and a sheet of vinyl lattice, or build a decorative gateway arbor with a rounded canopy. Included are tips for building a trellis with copper, as well as building with rustic natural materials for an earthy outdoor appeal. Trellises & Arbors explores the top 40 plant picks, the basic tools needed and how to choose the right lumber. Tons of full-color photos enhance the easy-to-follow instructions.
www.sunsetbooks.com

Schiffer Books has a classy new hardback titled, ***Cast-in-place Concrete Countertops***. The subhead says it all; it's a "Step-by-Step Complete Guide to Construction." Author Tom Ralston is a third-generation concrete contractor who shares his years of experience creating beautiful concrete countertops with a nearly artistic appeal. Ralston shows how to plan, and complete a cast-in-place system using step-by-step imagery and tons of beautiful full-color photos. Learn to start with the basics and work up to building forms, mixing and pouring, adding colorants and finishing the countertops. For the professional craftsman, there's even a chapter dedicated to estimating and selling the countertops. This is crucial reading for any DIY'er who is about to tackle such a challenging yet beautiful project.
www.schifferbooks.com



When it comes to the lighter side of landscaping, author Katherine Whiteside gives us ***The Way We Garden Now***, from Clarkson Potter Publishers. Whiteside walks the reader through 41 projects for creating a gorgeous garden. Topics range from making basic flower beds and fighting weeds, to building a patio and growing both ornamentals and edibles. An avid gardener and writer on the subject, Whiteside explains how to create a garden tailored to your personal tastes, by mixing and matching projects according to your skill level, climate and space limitations. Included are expert tips, explanatory drawings and lots of artful watercolor illustrations. I met Whiteside at the last Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Show in Atlanta, Georgia. She shared with me photographs of the immaculate garden and landscaping that decorate her home; you can rest



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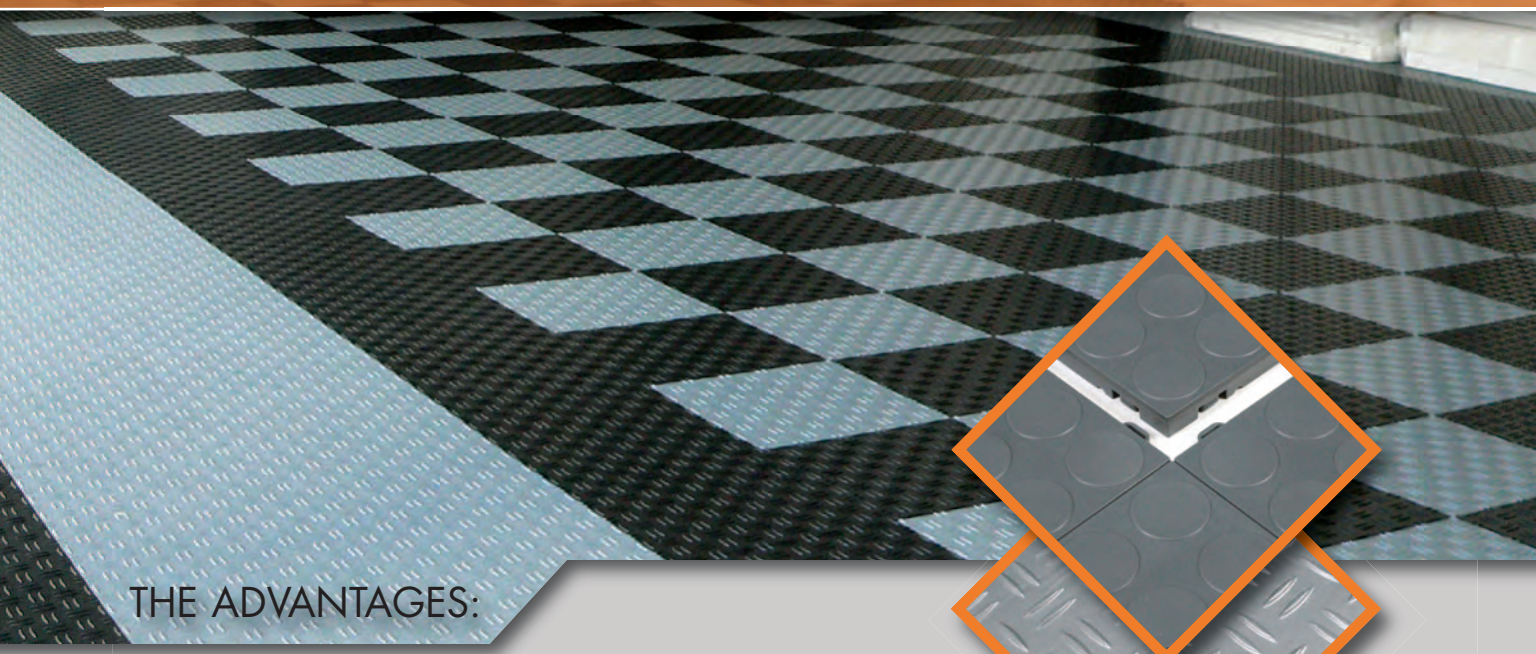

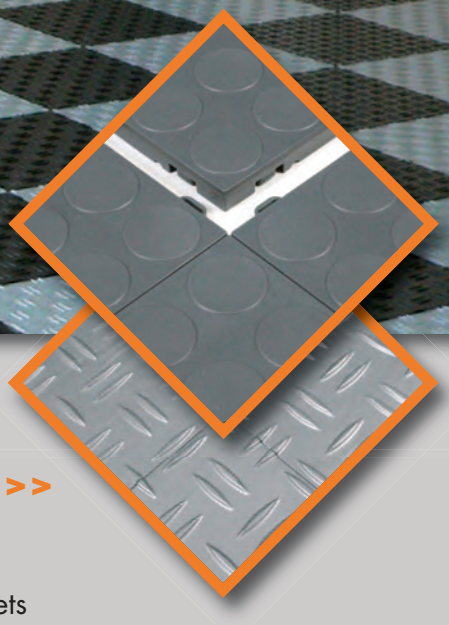

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SUMMER READING FOR THE DIY'ER

If I Had a Hammer
MORE THAN 100 EASY FIXES AND WEEKEND PROJEC
Andrea Ridou
Host of the Ask Andrea Radio Show
Sunset backyards for KIDS
Playhouses, sandboxes, tree forts, swing sets, sports areas, and more
Jeff May's
HEALTHY HOME TIPS
A WORKBOOK FOR DETECTING, DIAGNOSING & ELIMINATING
Pesky Pests, Stinky Stenches, Musty Mold, and Other Aggravating Home Problems
Jeffrey C. May & Connie L. May

assured that this is an author who is well versed and passionate about the topic.

www.randomhouse.com

If I Had a Hammer, from Harper Collins Publishers, is radio host Andrea Ridout's guide to "More than 100 Easy Fixes and Weekend Projects." Chock full of ideas and information on basic home-improvement tasks, the book would make a nice entry-level manual for the budding DIY'er. Ridout covers everything from basic tools to tips on faux painting, installing a doorknob and saving energy around the house. The book is a little too elementary for the seasoned home remodeler, but would make a nice gift for most newlyweds. My only minor gripe is the book's scarcity of artwork, as I've always considered the visual component of how-to stories to be extremely helpful when explaining a project.

www.harpercollins.com

Build your kids the outdoor headquarters you wanted as a child with ***Backyards for Kids*** from Sunset Books. Loaded with detailed photos and instructions for building projects like treehouses and swing sets, the book focuses on promoting outdoor physical activity by creating fun outdoor areas for adventurous kids that prefer fresh air over video games. Build sandboxes, sports areas and more. Learn to build many structures from scratch, or follow detailed instructions on how to assemble from kits, including a pre-fabricated log cabin playhouse.

www.sunsetbooks.com

The next title is a mouthful: ***Jeff May's Healthy Home Tips: A Workbook for Detecting, Diagnosing, and Eliminating Pesky Pests, Stinky Stenches, Musty Mold and Other Aggravating Home Problems***. Jeff May is a certified indoor air-quality professional and the new book is available from The John Hopkins University Press. Included are check lists, explanatory diagrams and "Do's" and "Don'ts" for conducting your own indoor air investigations, from basements to attics. The book provides tools to help conquer indoor air pollution along with the asthma, headaches, congestions, runny hose and eye irritation that can result. This is a great tool for combating airborne bacteria, dust mites, soot, chemicals and mold.

www.myhouseiskillingme.com

Dennis Jeffries' ***The Flooring Handbook: the Complete Guide to Choosing and Installing Floors***, a Firefly Book, has served as one of the EHT staff's favorite desk references for the last couple of years. With plenty of straightforward installation instructions, design considerations and step-by-step photography for practically every type of flooring, this is a must-own book for the serious handyman or DIY'er. Everything from hardwoods, carpeting, resilient floors, laminates, tiles and even natural fiber floors are covered. I particularly love the organization of the book where the different types of flooring are depicted in exploded diagrams showing the various subfloors, underlayments and materials that compose each system. It

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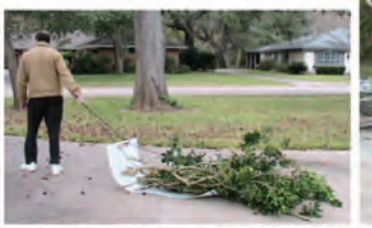

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WHY WOMEN BUY IT...

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"It's amazing! I saved 90% of the work by not having to lift soil and pavers into the wheelbarrow." -- Mrs. S, IA

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SUMMER READING FOR THE DIY'ER

makes choosing the right materials and installation procedure easy, even for novice remodelers.
www.fireflybooks.com

Workshops You Can Build, written by David and Jeanie Stiles and published by Firefly Books, boasts more than 300 detailed illustrations that show the building process in step-by-step detail. Whether you're a carpenter, writer, artist or general tinkerer, the Stiles have a workshop for you. Included are plans for simple shops built with modest budgets, as well as elaborate and expensive designs for the seasoned builder. Beautiful full-color photos of a wide variety of workshop styles provide design inspiration, and the authors' also focus on the inside of workshops as well. Create work benches, shelves, tools racks and organizers. This a great resource for anyone building a new backyard hut; it covers basic construction practices, necessary tools, how to plan your location and how to build it—from top to bottom.
www.fireflybooks.com

Here's another great guide for any homeowner—or professional—who tackles their own plumbing projects. I can tell you from experience that "how-to" stories on plumbing are difficult to photograph and explain, but ***The Ultimate Guide to Plumbing*** from Creative Homeowner Press utilizes cut-away photography and explanatory illustrations that shed perfect light on the subject. Included is a wealth of knowledge on everything from from supply lines to main drains. Learn to install fixtures, how to choose the right pipe, and how to correctly make all sorts plumbing connections to keep your home leak-free. Install a water heater or replace a sink drain; it's all here in one easy-to-read text that comes highly recommended by the *EHT* staff. **EHT**
www.creativehomeowner.com

AN OLDIE BUT A GOODIE

How To Build and Contract Your Own Home, by Larry Eisinger, was first published in 1957. This classic how-to book is often credited with initiating the do-it-yourself movement in home improvement. Although many of the materials, tools and economic conditions have evolved over time, most methods of home building are essentially the same as they were 50 years ago. How To Build and Contract Your Own Home remains the quintessential tome on the subject, and Eisinger provides easy-to-follow instructions and advice on everything from excavating and building foundation forms to ceiling coverings and sewage disposal. The book chronicles Eisinger's personal journey in which he, along with friends, family and a few subcontractors, built his own house, and the story is grounded in his experience and expertise. He explains what you can do yourself, what you should contract, and he provides an estimation of the money you can save by shouldering most of the workload. Simply stated, if you have any plans whatsoever to build a house, then go get this book. How to Build and Contract Your Own Home, was upgraded and reprinted four times over a 14-year period. I'm happy to know Larry Eisinger personally and am proud to own a first-edition copy of the book, published in 1957 from Arco Publishing. You can find a copy online—I got mine at Amazon.com. Or, learn more at Larry Eisinger's Home Repair Workshop by visiting www.homerepairworkshop.com.

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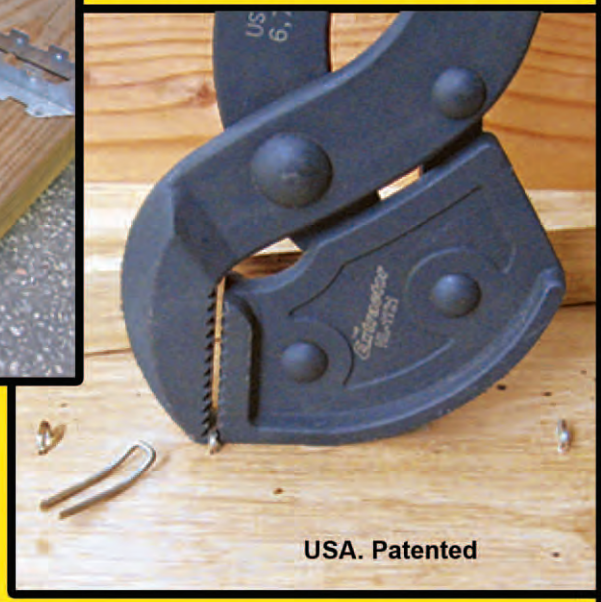

"...De-nailing and recycling old lumber actually became a less time-comsuming, less frustrating activity, if not (almost) an enjoyable activity."

-Woodworking News-

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HOW TO CHOOSE LUMBER FOR OUTDOOR PROJECTS

There are more choices than there used to be.

By Huck DeVenzio
Photos courtesy Wolmanized® Wood

Back in the early 1970s, when concrete patios were much more common than raised wood decks, the choices for deck materials were few: redwood, cedar, maybe cypress. In that same decade, lumber dealers began stocking pressure-treated pine, suburban living became part of the American dream, and backyard decks began their tremendous growth in popularity.

The appeal of decks remains strong today and is spreading to other countries. Not only do decks provide useful, private space for outdoor relaxation and entertaining, they also add to the resale value of homes. There are reported to be some 30,000,000 wood decks in the United States, and the number increases with every new subdivision.

Over the past few years, many alternative materials have been introduced for deck construction. Newer options include plastic products, wood-plastic composites and tropical hardwoods. The primary deck material, however, is pressure-treated wood.

More than 80 percent of U.S. decks are built with preserved wood.

HOW TO CHOOSE LUMBER FOR OUTDOOR PROJECTS

Treated wood, now sold in nearly every lumber outlet in North America, is chosen by contractors and do-it-yourselfers for a variety of reasons: It has a natural appearance, its resistance to termites and rot is well established, wood is a plentiful and renewable resource, and treated wood is usually the most economical choice.

But, even in preserved wood, the options have expanded. Different species of wood are treated in different regions, some treated wood contains built-in water repellent, and wood is available that is re-dried after treatment.

How can a busy homeowner sort out the possibilities?

Just as there's a time to reap and a time to sow, there's a time to select high-grade, well-protected outdoor lumber and a time to choose more economical pieces. Homeowners building a deck or other backyard project need not spend extra money for quality they don't need, but they should not settle for second-rate material in applications where quality is preferred and beneficial.

LONGEVITY

If you want to use real wood for an outdoor project and you expect the wood to withstand termites and fungal decay, your principal choices are either a naturally durable wood (i.e., all-heartwood grade of redwood or all-heartwood grade of cedar) or wood that has been pressure-treated with preservative. The most widely used brand of treated wood is Wolmanized® wood, a name by which people frequently, but erroneously, refer to all preserved wood.

In much of the country, all-heart redwood and cedar are rare or discouragingly expensive. Preserved wood, which is made from plentiful species, is economical. It is also backed by a long-term warranty, an assurance not available with redwood or cedar. Some producers offer warranties that extend for the life of the purchaser. Treated wood is used for permanent structures ranging from foundation piling to seawalls.

As a result, more than 80 percent of all U.S. decks are built entirely or partially with preserved wood, according to national surveys. Even when plastic or composite decking is used for the deck platform, preserved wood is usually used for posts,

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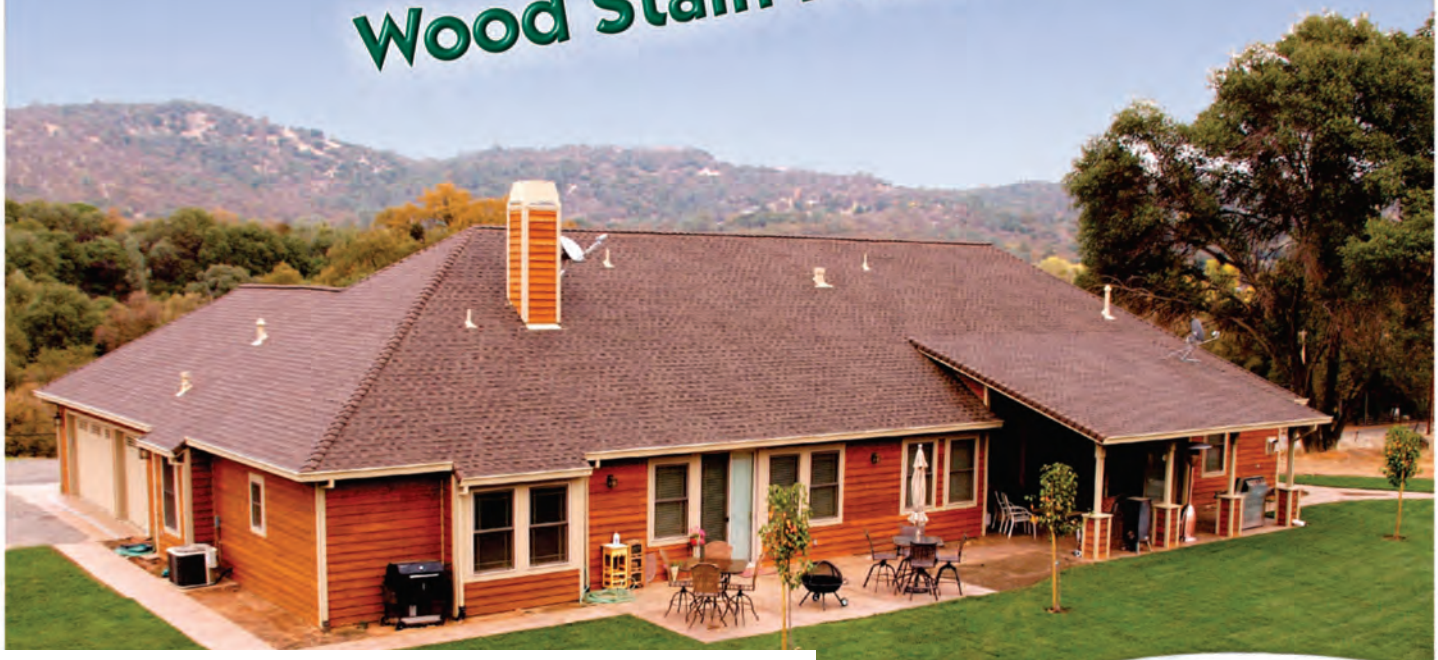

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beams and joists because of wood's structural strength.

APPEARANCE

Appearance is named the top priority by most people planning a deck and choosing lumber. The appearance of a deck affects homeowner pride and the deck's value at the time of the eventual sale of the home.

Treated wood can be found in a variety of lumber grades—from knot-free, close-grained grades to lower grades that have more knots, splits, and wane (missing corners where bark once existed). Other than imparting a greenish hue, pressure-treatment has little effect on the appearance of wood; treating makes wood last longer regardless of its appearance.

The grades of lumber are determined by certified graders at sawmills, prior to treatment. The grade designation is stamped on each piece of wood. Generally, the higher the grade, the higher the cost.

For those parts of a deck where the wood is conspicuous and you want top appearance, select a higher grade of lumber. Examples are the platform and railing. High-grade lumber is also preferred for other projects, such as gazebos and outdoor furniture. Where the wood will be unseen (such as a deck joist) or where you might like a rustic look (such as a retaining wall), you can buy a more economical grade.

PRESERVATIVE TREATMENTS

Since the early treated wood decks were built, the wood was impregnated with CCA (chromated copper arsenate) preservative. Now, however, residential lumber is protected by newer preservatives composed of different ingredients—they are copper-based with non-metallic fungicides. Wood treated with these preservatives is now available from lumber dealers under various brand names; most widely known is Wolmanized® Residential Outdoor® Wood.

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tain no copper or any metals at all. Intended for decking, rails, and other out-of-ground applications, wood protected with such non-metallic preservatives have exceptionally low impact on metal hardware, coatings, sawblades and the environment. The first brand on the market was Wolmanized® L^3 wood.

PROTECTION

Regardless of the preservatives, different conditions present different hazards for wood. For example, wood that has contact with the ground is more susceptible to termite and rot damage than wood which remains above ground. Wood immersed in seawater has even greater vulnerability.

The wood preservation industry has established standard

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levels of protection that are adequate for the different hazard conditions. The standards refer to the amount of chemical retained in wood after treatment, or retention, and is measured in pounds of preservative per cubic foot (pcf) of wood. Higher retention levels enable wood to withstand more demanding conditions.

The numerical retentions are no longer the same for all preservatives; newer types require less chemical. Look for the intended use (e.g., Above Ground, Ground Contact, Decking) on the wood.

CONFIDENCE

When you buy treated wood, you do so because you want the wood to last. But what assurance do you have that your purchase will stand up?

You can be certain you're getting properly treated wood if you buy wood with 1) a respected brand name, 2) a clear warranty extending at least 30 years and backed by a solid company, and 3) the verification of an independent and accredited inspection agency. This information appears on ink stamps or, more commonly, on tags stapled to each piece of wood. The tags also indicate the intended use and may include condensed safety recommendations.

OTHER OPTIONS

You can find preserved wood products in a full range of sizes from 1-by-4-inch boards to 6-by-6 timbers, in a variety of lengths, plus plywood. For decking, a popular thickness is 5/4-inch (spoken "five-quarters"), which has rounded edges for a distinctive look.

While the preservative treatment protects wood against termites and rot, it does not prevent moisture damage which can cause warping, cracking, and deterioration of appearance. Some treated wood is produced with built-in water repellent which keeps the wood looking good longer. Several brands are available; the water repellent feature will be marked on the wood and noted on store signs.

Some dealers offer treated wood that has been re-dried, either Kiln Dried After Treatment (KDAT) or Air Dried After Treatment (ADAT). This step adds to the price of the treated wood, but provides a lighter weight product that is less prone to warp and can be painted without a waiting period.

Many stores also carry treated wood specialty products—such as spindles, handrails, ball tops, step stringers and lattice—which can make construction easier and embellish your project.

Some dealers offer re-dried lumber for a lighter weight product that is less prone to warp and can be painted without a waiting period.

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MAINTENANCE

Every decking material requires some maintenance, for cleaning if nothing else. Pressure-treatment provides long-term protection against termites and rot, but even treated wood is subject to moisture damage. Unless preventative measures are taken, alternating periods of precipitation and sunlight will cause swelling, shrinking, warping, and splitting, which are natural characteristics of wood exposed to the elements. To protect your wood against weather and premature aging, coat the wood with an effective brand of water repellent as soon as possible and then reapply a coating every year or so.

Paint and film-forming stains can also be applied but, unless your wood has been re-dried after treatment, you should wait several months for the wood to dry before coating in order to get satisfactory adhesion.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

You can feel good about using preserved wood, an environmentally responsible choice. Treated lumber comes from our only major renewable building material—wood. The trees used are plentiful and fast-growing, and they are grown on managed timberlands (not in ecologically sensitive ancient forests or unregulated, third world rainforests). Treated wood requires less energy to produce than alternative building products, and the treating process generates no air pollutants or wastewater discharges that are considered significant. The preservatives are manufactured, in large part, from recycled materials.

Since growing trees absorb carbon dioxide and since wood products sequester carbon, the use of preserved wood reduces greenhouse gas.

Most important for homeowners and the environment, the treatment extends the life of wood. This enables a deck to last longer, and it reduces demands on forests and other resources.

By following these suggestions, you'll select long-lasting, economical material for your project. Now all you have to do is build it ... **EHT**

Editor's Note: *Huck DeVenzio is manager of marketing communications for Arch Wood Protection and a sponsoring member of the National Association of Home & Workshop Writers. He has written numerous articles and booklets on decks and preserved wood.*

INTERNET REFERENCES ON PRESERVED WOOD

Southern Pine Council
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The Laminate Flooring Boom

Your Free Shopping Guide

Laminate flooring has remained one of the fastest growing home improvement trends for the last two decades. In fact, sometime in the next year, laminate flooring is projected to outsell wood flooring. Laminate flooring has also been showing up on many TV home improvement shows from "Flip That House," "Designed To Sell," "Sell This House," and "Trading Spaces," just to name a few. Even Bob Villa installed laminate flooring in his home. So what does everyone else know that you don't?

The laminate flooring boom has been driven by several compelling factors including; its outstanding performance, low (relative) cost and ease of installation. In fact, most homeowners install it themselves. Even someone without laminate flooring experience can often install a room full of laminate in a day. The cost per-square-foot is generally much cheaper than hardwood (even if sweat equity isn't a factor). And, a laminate floor will last many years without needing waxes, sealers, or refinishing of any kind. Usually just a dust mop will do the trick.

Since the laminate flooring market has grown so quickly, a lot of people don't know how to shop for laminate flooring or what features they should look for. Additionally, manufacturers have been quick to expand their product lines to fill almost every taste and budget. Unfortunately, most sales people have not kept pace with the new features and developments in the laminate flooring industry and, worse still, some manufacturers have learned to market and pass off their "budget" lines as "first grade."

If you're considering buying laminate flooring, you should take a few moments to find out about the features and components that make up a laminate floor. Then decide which features are best for you and your situation. Much like the 5 "C's" when shopping for a diamond, there are several key components that you need to look for when shopping for your laminate floor to ensure that you get the quality and value you're looking for. Here are the basic features and the difference they will make in your floor.

THE CENTER OF THE LAMINATE FLOORING —THE CORE

Just as you wouldn't build your home on a weak foundation, you wouldn't want to build features on a weak board. The core density is the single most important component in your laminate flooring. You want a core made with the highest density material possible. Not only does this make your locking mechanism stronger, since it is an extension of the core, it also makes it more difficult for water to penetrate the flooring. Softer boards are more porous like a sponge and will sustain more damage more quickly than a harder board.

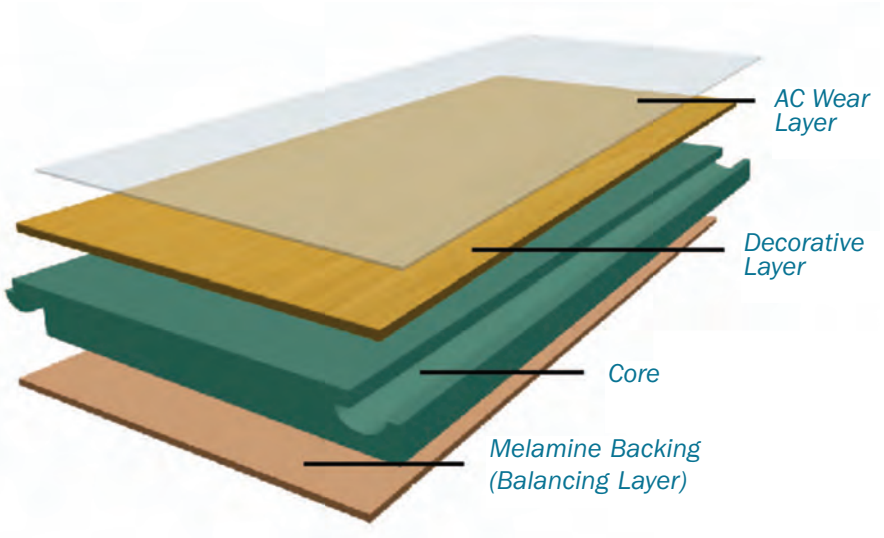
The denser or harder the board, the better it will be able to resist dents and deep scratches. Most people seem to prefer the sound of a denser board, and claim that it sounds more like hardwood.

Since almost all laminate floors are made from a high density fiberboard (HDF) you'll need to determine where on that spectrum of HDFs your board lands. Some manufacturers will list the density with a kilogram (kg) measure, with the low landing measuring in the high 700 kg range and the high landing measuring in the 900 kg range. You will see more manufacturers listing their board density when it is above the 850 kg range and those manufacturers with boards softer than that are less eager to publish their densities. If the manufacturer or salesperson is not forthcoming with that information, you may have to find your own method of testing the board density, or choose to work with a more forthcoming company. I recommend that you take samples of all the boards you are considering, and hit them all with a hammer, smack the corners or throw them into a bucket of water for an hour or two. You'll be surprised at the difference in the way the board handles these tests. And if a board is not going to stand up to your abuse, you probably don't want it on your floor.

THE SURFACE WEAR LAYER AND TEXTURE

One of the key features of laminate floors is its extremely durable, clear, wear layer. Made with aluminum oxide and applied in the factory, this wear layer will last many years having shoes and other objects drug across it countless times. Better still, it can even take on pet claws and come out the winner. The wear layer can come with a number of finishes from a very glossy flat "piano finish" to the more popular "embossed" finishes, where you can see the outline of a wood grain in the reflection. Some manufacturers have products with the embossing lines matching the colored grain lines underneath exactly, which is called a "registered embossed" finish. Other manufacturers have brought out specialty finishes, like the hand-scraped finish, that has the wear layer applied over an irregular board that gives it a more earthy or rustic look. Manufacturers have also found great success cutting a bevel on the edges of the board setting apart the individual boards. This "V-groove," as it is called, also has the benefit of helping to disguise the swelling of an ill used floor. Since a floor that has been subjected to too much moisture will usually swell at the joints, it is always more visible with a flat-seam floor than a V-groove floor. If you do buy a floor with a V-groove, check to see if the small angle is painted or "banded." A painted edge is sometimes more porous and will hold stains.

The most important feature of the wear layer is its longevity. Here again there is a range of possibilities. Lab techs have come up with a measure for how long the floors will last before being worn down by the abrasion of countless footsteps and other wear on your floor. This measure is called the Abrasion Coefficient, or AC Wear Rating. As impressive as the name sounds the test is fairly simple. A sanding machine with a specific grit of paper is placed on the wear layer with a specific weight on top. Then they time how long it takes to wear through the wear layer and give it a rating number. The lowest AC rating you'll probably find is an "AC-2." If another wear layer tested lasts 60% longer than the AC-2, it gets a rating of "AC-3," and if another lasts 60% longer than the AC-3 it gets the rating of "AC-4." Most people wouldn't recommend you use an AC-2 wear layer in any room but a guest room, or



an area with very little traffic, while an AC-3 is rated for the whole house. An AC-4 is rated for light commercial applications and is better suited for high traffic homes, or homes with large families or pets.

THE LOCKING MECHANISM

Originally, laminate floors were glued together, which was a messy, time-consuming job. Soon manufacturers developed new mechanisms to hold the boards together. The first locking mechanisms were knocked together while laying flat. While installing these new floors was much quicker, some found that over time the boards could "slide" back apart. The latest and generally agreed as the best system for installing and holding the boards together uses a locking mechanism that pivots one board into the other. Once the new board is "rolled down" into the previous row, it will not come apart, allowing the easiest installation and the best holding power. If some years later, you need to replace a board, you can "roll up" however many rows of boards needed until you reach the board(s) you want to replace, and then reinstall the boards removed. (This is why it is always a good idea to keep some extra boards, since this type of laminate floor allows you to replace part of your floor without having to replace the whole floor.)

Some manufacturers are also using a wax sealer on the locking mechanisms. This new addition has two benefits. The most talked about benefit is that it makes it much harder for surface spills to penetrate into the board. Since surface moisture can, at times, work its way into the joints between the boards, having a wax seal provides another layer of protection. Another benefit to the wax seal is that it prevents the wear within the locking mechanism, from the tiny movement under countless footsteps.

THE BACKING

Most of the floors available today have a backing material. Typically this will be a melamine layer (the same material that you'll find in the interior of modern cabinets). This backing is an important feature that will help protect the underside of your floor from moisture, provide another sound barrier and "balance" the boards. Since changes in temperature and humidity make the laminate floor expand or contract a small amount and the tough wear layer is less likely to move, a floor without the backing will tend to "cup" in one direction or the other. Having the backing balances the bottom and the top so that the expansion and contraction happen more evenly across the board.

THE BOARD THICKNESS

Early laminate floors were almost exclusively 8mm or thinner. Today you will find more floors in the 12mm range. As mentioned earlier, the thicker boards tend to "feel" and often "sound" more like hardwood floors, if they are made of a dense material. The thicker boards also allow the floor to have a bit more substantial locking mechanisms.

1-STRIP (FULL PLANK), 2-STRIP, 3-STRIP

There are three standard strip designs that you will want to consider. When laminate first came out, it was mostly 3-strip. This means that each plank of wood had the "look" of 3 strips of wood. Today, there is a 2-strip pattern, which means each plank of wood has the "look" of 2 strips of wood. And, the most popular and most authentic looking laminate floor is a full plank or 1-strip (single plank). This means that each plank has its own grain pattern. Full plank flooring is usually synonymous with the best quality of laminate flooring. The problem with 2- or 3-strip laminate is that they typically have fat seams and over time those seams accumulate dirt, especially in lower quality wood floors. Also, those seams stand out, which makes the *fake* seams in between the 2 and 3 strip flooring look really different, most likely indicating that your floor is not authentic. With full-plank floors, your seams will wear more evenly, and therefore look consistent throughout your floor.

FLAT SEAM VS V-GROOVE

The difference between a flat seam and a V-groove or beveled edge, is that a flat seam feels and looks smooth and flat. The disadvantage is that often, flat seams are found in lower quality products and typically are not truly flat or even. They also tend to show more wear over time and swell more with moisture, making the seams even more obvious. V-groove is where the seams have a small "V shape" between each seam. This V-groove can be on two sides or all four sides of each plank. The most realistic look is the four-sided V-groove. Some people have expressed concern about dirt getting trapped in the V-grooves making it difficult to clean. Ironically the V-groove was introduced specifically to collect the dirt from the

floor so that it isn't rubbed into the floor causing damage. The debris that is collected is easily swept away with a broom, or removed with a solid surface flooring vacuum or attachment.

Price is not always a good determining factor when trying to buy a quality product. You have to consider your time in shopping for your floor, clearing the room, removing your old floor covering, installing the floor and replacing all the furniture in the room. Always shop for the best bargain, but be sure not to skimp on quality. And make sure that you select a floor that will endure the daily wear and tear that your family will surely put it through.

The internet is a huge growing resource for purchasing high quality laminate flooring at warehouse prices. Since warehouse space it relatively inexpensive compared to retail space, and most internet companies can run very lean, they are able to pass that savings on to their customers. This is why you can typically get laminate flooring products that are of far superior quality for less online, than you can buy the lower grade laminate at your local Home Depot or Lowe's.

The only downside to purchasing online is the inability to see the product color and quality in person. Companies that are confident they are selling top quality products will typically send you samples of their products free of charge.

If you would like to speak with professional flooring installers and ask more detailed questions, call the professional Laminate Flooring Installers, free of charge at 800-603-0727. EHT

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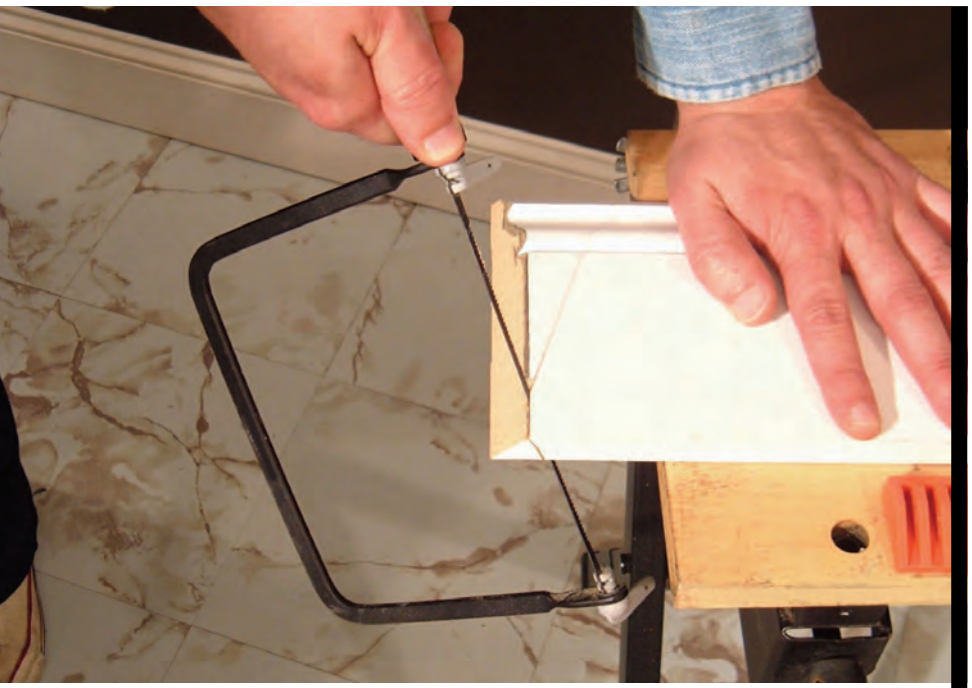
Learning to Cope

How to Make Cope Joints in Molding



By Matt Weber

When installing baseboards, crown molding (also spelled "moulding") and chair rails, it's tempting to cut 45-degree miters at the corners and hope for a sure fit. The problem is that most walls aren't perfectly square. Joining two 45-cut molding pieces may give you a square joint, but a square joint may not work for your crazy corner. In fact, it seems like every wall is just a "hair" out of square. This problem could be due to a framing error or a buildup of drywall compound in the corner. But even a perfect miter joint can develop gaps when the wood dries and contracts in winter.

Unlike miter joints, cope joints have one trim piece that is cut square, such as the baseboard shown, and butted against the adjacent wall at the corner. The joining trim piece is carefully cut to nest against the profile of the first. These joints eliminate the problem of out-of-square corners when installing trim, and they're less likely to reveal a gap when the wood shrinks.

CUTTING CORNERS

To make a cope joint, butt the first piece of molding into the corner and fasten in place. The second piece of molding should be cut a few inches longer than its final length. On the intersecting end of the second piece, cut a 45-degree inside miter. Then run a carpenter's pencil along the edge of the mitered profile, marking the shapes and curves for better visibility.

The traditional way to make the joint is with a coping saw. The thin, flexible blade of a coping saw is designed especially for cutting out intricate patterns. Clamp the second piece of molding securely to a work surface and use the coping saw to cut along the pencil line that marks the decorative pattern. It may help to angle the blade to back-cut the molding. Try to keep the blade about 1/16 inch to the waste side of the cutline.

When most of the wood is removed, use a file to finish up the cut and clean the profile, revealing a shaped edge that will be the only point of contact between the intersecting molding pieces. You want to remove all the wood from in front of the profile and create a socket that fits over the face of the first piece. I own a five-pack of files of various shapes, but for coping joints I mostly use a "rat tail" file, which has a round, slender shape that works well for fine-tuning small curves and edges. A flat file works well on square edges.

Next, test-fit the molding against the first piece. Check for any gaps and sand or file away any high spots for a good fit. Once you're satisfied, cut the molding to length, cutting the uncoped end square and

The first piece of molding should be butted squarely against the wall and fastened in place.

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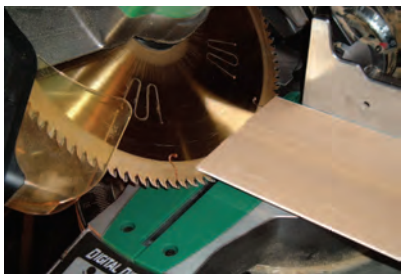
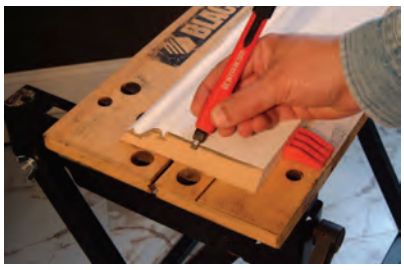
butting it against the far corner to meet another coped piece on the next wall. Nail the molding in place and finish by caulking the seam. Proceed around the room to complete the installation.

HOW TO PROCEED

When coping molding, even the best carpenters have trouble creating the "perfect" joint. For the best looking installation, you should follow a certain order as shown in the diagram. For the sake of explanation, I'll describe the procedure for a rectangular four-wall room with a single door. Begin on the wall that is opposite the door and install a piece that is square at both ends, flush between the two adjacent walls. This way, anyone walking into the room sees the best side of the joints. On the two adjacent or "side" walls, cope the joints where they meet the installed molding, but cut the opposite ends square and butt them against the "door wall." The molding on this fourth wall should be coped on both ends, but the joints on the "door wall" are the least noticeable in the room in case of any minor imperfections. EHT

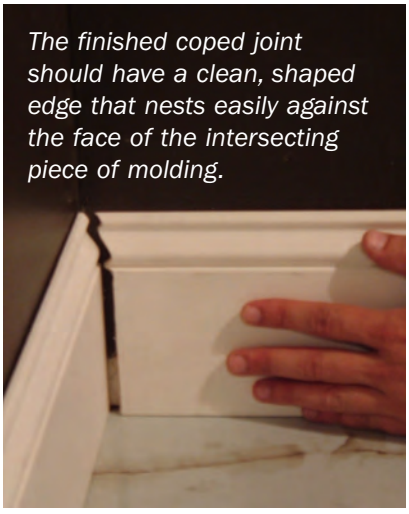
Cut an inside miter on the second piece of molding, cutting the piece a few inches longer than its final length.



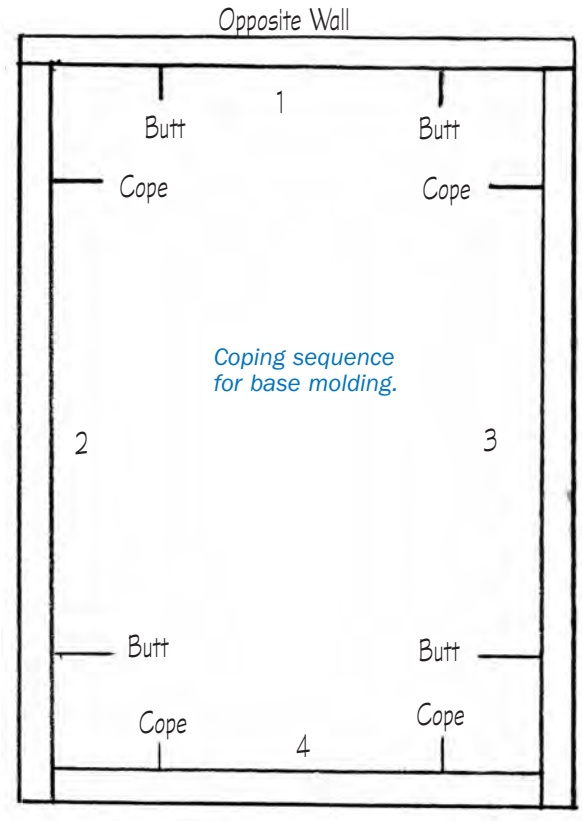


Use a pencil to outline the edge of the molding profile. Use a coping saw to cut along the pencil line, about 1/16" to the waste side of the profile edge.

Use a file to finish the joint, fine-tuning the small curves and edges.



The finished coped joint should have a clean, shaped edge that nests easily against the face of the intersecting piece of molding.



Coping sequence for base molding.

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Drawer Slide Replacement

Getting Drawers Back on Track

By Matt Weber

Replacing drawer slides is one of those annoying "must do's" that spring up from time to time when the old drawer hardware wears out. The result is a drawer that sticks—or collapses—inside or out of the cabinet, spilling its contents all over the place. The only good thing about the replacement chore is that it's an easy fix. The only thing "extreme" about the project is how extremely simple it is. As long as the slides are properly sized and installed level and even, you should have the drawer back on track in practically no time.

Shown is a quick step-by-step guide on how to replace some basic wheeled slides. In fact, the slides shown here are of the "el cheapo" variety we grabbed at the local big box store. If you're replacing slides at home, it may be wise to upgrade to some higher quality friction slides or even ones that utilize ball bearings. Some slide mechanisms install on the center of each side of the drawer, others at the bottom sides. Some even use a single track centered at the bottom of the drawer. In any case, the replacement procedure is basically the same.

REMOVE AND REPLACE

First, remove the drawer by pulling it out and lifting the glides from the guide tracks. If the hardware is only bent or misaligned, you can sometimes bend the components back in shape with a pair of pliers. Otherwise, measure the drawer so you can purchase the appropriately sized slides from your supplier. In the case shown, the plastic mounting plate of the guide track had broken. So I removed the broken hardware and opted for a full replacement. It may help to take the old hardware to your supplier if searching for an exact match.

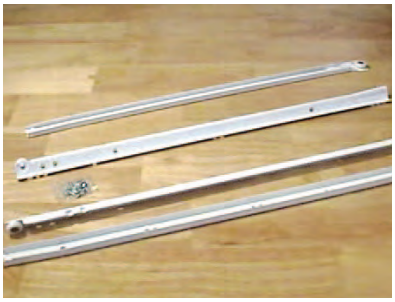
In the case shown, the available slides were too long for the

cabinet. So I trimmed the slides with a metal-cutting chop saw, but you can also use metal snips or a hacksaw. Once cut to size, the job is a basic remove-and-replace process. Unscrew the existing hardware and replace with the new components. The glides, guide tracks, mounting plates and necessary screws all came together as a kit from the hardware store. Start with the glides, and move on to the tracks, taking note of the locations for the replacement screws. A cordless drill/driver makes quick work of the assembly. Instructions are included with the replacement kits, but the

job really couldn't be more straightforward.

Usually the guide tracks are fastened not only to the front and rear of the cabinet case but also screwed to the side walls of the cabinets. In the case shown, the cabinets were cheaply constructed and did not have an interior

partition wall. That factor probably contributed to the instability of the drawer hardware and the resulting failure of the mounting plate. Adding an interior wall to help anchor the guide tracks would probably help the drawer's performance, but for the purposes of this article, at least the missing wall affords a nice unobstructed camera angle at the replacement procedure.



When replacing the guide tracks, use a torpedo level to make sure the slides will travel in the same even plane, or the drawer will bind when operating. Also take careful measurements of the mounting plates so they are repositioned exactly in line with the slides—not too wide or

too narrow, or the drawer won't open/close properly.

With all the components in place, it's time to reposition the drawer by sliding the wheeled slides into the guide tracks. If necessary, add a little lubrication to make sure everything operates smoothly. **EHT**

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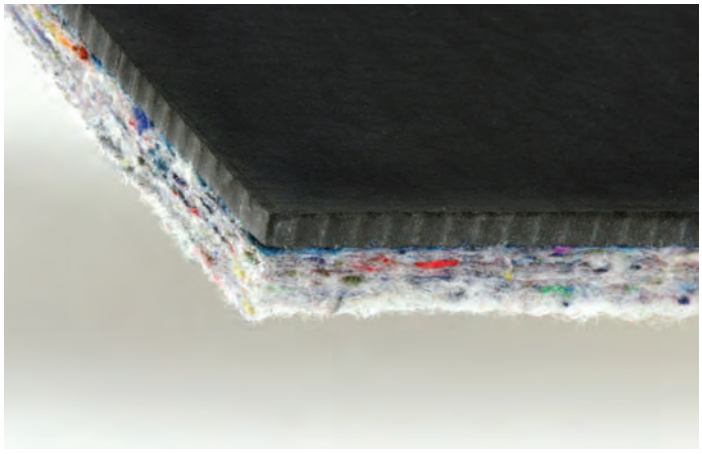

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HOT PRODUCTS

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Instead of resorting to traditional teardown/rebuild bathroom remodeling, which can top $15,000 and put the bathroom out of commission for weeks, homeowners can now remodel without the hassle or high cost. With Bathcrest EasyCare liners homeowners can use their existing tub, tile or shower as a base to install new tub, shower or wall surround liners over old fixtures. This allows most jobs to be done in a day with no demolition or mess at a price about 1/3 to 1/2 the cost of traditional remodeling. Because the available tub, shower and wall liners include a variety of styles with a complete line of accessories including Moen faucets and shower heads, shower storage niches, tub grab bars, wainscoting and window trim, homeowners get the dramatic visual and functional impact of a bathroom remodel without the cost or hassle. By putting acrylic bathtub liners such as those by Bathcrest over older tubs, homeowners get a clean, non-porous finish that encapsulates older tubs. For more info, call 1-800-826-6790 or visit www.bathcrest.com.

HEAVY-DUTY SCRAPERS

Hyde Tools offers a new line of professional scrapers built to take the daily pounding that these tools must endure while building in comfort features that make the work easier on the user. The new heavy-duty scrapers are used for removal applications ranging from floor tile and adhesives; wall tile and coatings; carpeting and linoleum; epoxies and plastics; and roofing materials. The tools are available with 4- or 6-inch high carbon steel blades with two sharpened edges for twice the life. The blades can be sharpened, and are removed with two easy-to-change screws. The welded neck design will not spin loose, and the die-cast head keeps the blade rigid under stress. The handle is made from durable heavy-gauge pipe, which is covered with a large foam hand area. The end of the handle is fitted with a comfortable rubber grip for maximum striking power. Visit Hyde Tools at www.hydetools.com or call 1-800-USA-HYDE.

Brick Patios: Do they really need to be sealed?

Brick patios create a wonderful area of the home for relaxation and entertainment and, unlike wooden decks, they are considered to be "maintenance free" … but are they really?

The simple answer is: No they are not.

Although brick patios don't require the annual regiment of cleaning and staining that a wooden deck often does, if left uncared for, patios can easily become unattractive, uneven, faded out and consumed by weeds. The reason for the change is simple and the remedy to prevent it quite easy.

First, the problem is that weather constantly attacks your patio, just like every other exterior area of the home. The sun's ultraviolet rays fade the colors from brick, and the rains wash the sand from between the joints of the pavers. Left unchecked, this erosion will eventually cause the bricks to become uneven. Over time, weeds will grow in the joints between the bricks, and ants will colonize in them as well, considering your patio their home.

The simple solution is to seal the patio with a water-based sealer. Unlike solvent-based sealers, water-based sealers will solidify, or harden, the sand in the joints. This prevents the sand from washing out with future rains and makes it difficult for weeds to take hold or ants to colonize the sand. Sealers also add an attractive "wet look" to the pavers, accenting the colors in the stone and giving a rich, vibrant appearance. The better sealers on the market, such as Defy's Epoxy Fortified Paver Sealer, will also protect the color of the bricks from fading by providing strong, durable protection from the sun's rays.

The process for applying a sealer consists of four easy steps, beginning with a good cleaning. First, power-wash the patio to remove ground-in dirt. Any minor staining, such as rust stains from patio furniture can be removed by using a little muriatic acid during the cleaning process.

Secondly, level out any uneven bricks by removing them, adding enough sand to even things out, and then replacing the bricks to their original location.

Next, re-fill the joints between the bricks with new sand by simply pouring sand on the patio and sweeping enough into the joints to fill them back up.

And lastly, using a pump-up garden type sprayer, apply two coats of water-based sealer to the patio. Avoid over-application by using only as much sealer as the bricks can easily absorb.

A good water-based sealer, properly applied, will protect your patio from nature's elements and keep it looking great for years to come!

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